

Message Text

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42

ACTION NEA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 384

INFO AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

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E.O. 11652: N/A

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SUBJECT: REACTION TO KING'S ANNOUNCEMENT ON CONSTRUCTION
REFORM COMMISSION

REF: KATHMANDU 5162

1. REACTION

IS PREDICTABLY FAVORABLE SO KING'S ANNOUNCEMENT
DECEMBER QY ZAAT COMMISSION 2ILL BE FORMED TO STUDY POSSIBLE
CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM. PUBLIC STATEMENTS BY POLITICAL
FIGURES, HOWEVER, HAVE BEEN CAUTIOUS AND RELATIVELY BLAND
SINCE NO ONE IS YET CERTAIN WHEN OR HOW COMMISSION WILL
BE SET UP. FORMER PRIME MINISTER THAPA, FOR EXAMPLE,
ISSUED STATEMENT DECEMBER 24 IN WHICH HE HAILED SPEECH AS
"ENCOURAGEMENT TO THOSE WHO SEEK TIMELY REFORMS IN
ACCORDANCE WITH ASPIRATIONS OF PEOPLE." PRESS IN RECENT
DAYS HAS EMPHASIZED SIMILAR STATEMENTS ISSUED BY FORMER
PM BISTA, NCP LEADER S.P. UPADHYU A, PASHUPATI RANA, AND LEADERS
OF VARIOUS NATIONAL GROUPS.

2. MOST INTERESTING (AND POTENTIALLY IMPORTANT) COMMENT IS
THAT OF B.P. KOIRALA AS CARRIED BY INDIAN STATESMAN
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DECEMBER 23. ALTHOUGH KOIRALA DERIDED KING'S ANNOUNCEMENT

AS BEING VAGUE AND "NOT SUFFICIZWTLY FORTHRIGHT," HE DID STATE THAT "THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE SPEECH SHOULD BE EXPLORED TO DETERMINE THE KING'S INTENTIONS." TO DATE HIS COLLEAGUE IN THE CONGRESS PARTY (NCP) GENERAL SUBARNA SHUMSHERE HAS REMAINED SILENT, DESPITE WIDESPREAD SPECULATION THAT HIS RETURN TO KATHMANDU IS A SIGN THAT HIS RECONCILIATION WITH THE PALACE AND PANCHAYAT SYSTEM IS MORE LIKELY THAN AT ANY TIME IN RECENT PAST.

3. COMMENT: IN PRIVATE CONVERSATION BEAUXH EMBOFFS POLITICAL FIGURES HAVE BEEN SOMEWHAT RESTRAINED IN THEIR PRAISE OF BIRENDRA'S ANNOUNCEMENT. MOST ARE AWAITING FURTHER DETAILS BEFORE MAKING COMMITMENT TO SERVE OR SUPPORT ROYAL COMMISSION. BISTA, FOR EXAMPLE, SAID THAT HE WOULD NOT EXPECT MAJOR REFORMS TO COME OUT OF COMMISSION WHICH IS TO BE CONTROLLED BY PALACE, ALTHOUGH HE THOUGHT THAT MINIMUM THAT WOULD BE ACCEPTABLE WOULD BE BROADENING OF ELECTORAL BASE AND OPENING OF PANCHAYAT SESSIONS. WE HAVE LEARNED THAT SOME SORT OF COMMISSION HAS ALREADY BEEN TASKED BY KING TO EXAMINE REFORM OPTIONS (REFTEL). COMMITTEE IS COMPOSED OF THREE PALACE FUNCTIONARIES (NAGENDRA PRASAD SHRESTHA, MOHAMMED MOSHIN, AND KRISHNA PRASAD PANT) AND IT IS WIDELY ASSUMED THAT THIS BODY WILL BE EXPANDED AND MADE PUBLIC BY NOMINATION OF ADDITIONAL PUBLIC FIGURES. EVEN THIS, HOWEVER, IS NOT CERTAIN. GIVEN LACK OF FIRM INFORMATION ON KING'S INTENTIONS, RETICENCE ON PART OF MAJOR POLITICAL FIGURES IS UNDERSTANDABLE. BEST ESTIMATE OF THOSE WE HAVE TALKED TO IS THAT KING WILL NOMINATE PUBLIC FIGURES TO COMMISSION

SHORTLY BEFORE CORONATION BUT THAT ANY RECOMMENDATIONS WILL NOT BE PROMULGATED UNTIL MUCH LATER IN 1975.
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